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[JENYNS (SOAME)]

Every Man His Own Law-Maker;

OR, THE

ENGLISHMAN'S COMPLETE GUIDE

TO A

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM:

WHEREIN

THE ROAD TO NATIONAL CONFUSION IS MADE PLAIN AND EASY TO THE MEANEST CAPACITIES.

——————————FOR I
AT FIRST WAS MINE OWN KING——
CALIBAN IN THE TEMPEST, ACT I.

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*** *Tranſlations of this Work into the Welch, Manks, Corniſh, and Erſe Languages, are earneſtly requeſted from the dignified Clergy reſident in thoſe Parts.*

His Excellency, the Right Reverend, General, the Lord Biſhop of Derry, is expected to undertake for Ireland.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE reaſon for troubling the Public with the following pages at the preſent moment, will be obvious. It was become a taſk of abſolute neceſſity, to ſtrike out ſome new idea for a Reform of Parliament. The Duke of Richmond had clearly demonſtrated the abſurdity of every plan of Reform, but his own *; which in return had been proved by other Reformers to be wholly inadequate, inefficacious, and impracticable. In this difficulty we looked in vain for aſſiſtance from the inſtructive lucubrations of the Dublin Congreſs. Thoſe Gentlemen have not allowed us to profit from the reſult of their collective wiſdom: and we have too much reſpect for ſuch illuſtrious ſages, to attempt to draw aſide the oracular veil which covers their proceedings.

Pandere res altâ terrâ & caligine merſas. VIRGIL.

Under the impreſſion of this neceſſity, I have put together the following looſe Thoughts.—The example of my fellow-labourers makes it very needleſs for me to apologize for want of abilities, and total ignorance of the ſubject: Like them, I feel it my duty to offer to my Countrymen, my crude and undigeſted ideas upon it. And I doubt not but this little work will prove a ſafe and invaluable guide, for the deciſion of day-labourers, porters, chimney-ſweepers, ſhoe-blacks, and pick-pockets, on this important meaſure, to which they have hitherto been too little accuſtomed to turn their thoughts,

* Vide his Grace's Letter, page 29.

although it is to them that we are principally to look for its final execution.

It will be obſerved, that I have taken no notice of the celebrated Propoſal of Mr. Fox, for wreſting from the Executive Magiſtrate the power of diſſolving Parliaments. I certainly approve very much the ſpirit of ſuch a meaſure; conceiving that it has the ſtrongeſt tendency to overturn that conſtitution of which we all ſo juſtly complain. But in the preſent moment, I doubt its practicability. The late exerciſe of that prerogative has been ſo agreeable to the people, and they have ſhewn ſo ſtrong a diſpoſition to ſupport it in the hands in which it is now veſted, that I fear we muſt defer our attempt to ſome future and more auſpicious reign; when the Gentleman who propoſed this Reform, may poſſibly poſſeſs the power, and will doubtleſs retain the wiſh, to carry it into full execution. In the mean time, ſhould Parliament be fearful of diſſolution, it muſt be left to him to point out to them their conſtitutional remedies, and to ſave his country from ruin, by ſubverting her public credit, and by letting looſe upon us an army unpaid, and freed from the irkſome reſtraints of legal authority.

I cannot conclude, without expreſſing my ſatisfaction in the zealous endeavours of thoſe who are joined with me in this glorious Cauſe throughout the three kingdoms. The ſame generoſity in diſtributing gratis their invaluable publications, and the ſame ſpirit in braving the laws of their country, are common to them all. But there is one noble Lord, a native of North Britain, to whom our thanks are more particularly due. The daily exertions of this illuſtrious character, recall to our minds the glorious æra of June 1780, when the body of the people recovered (but alas! for a ſhort time only) their

their due weight in government: and the flames of Liberty burſt forth in their genuine heat and luſtre, to enlighten the inhabitants of this great metropolis.—When we ſee this zealous Patriot joining the band of hereditary Whigs, and going forth in the livery of Mr. Fox, to raiſe the ſpirit of the people, we may well hope for a repetition of the ſame bleſſings on ourſelves, our houſes, and our families: And we may prophecy to him that exaltation which he before ſo narrowly miſſed, to the great regret and diſappointment of his country.

Shakeſpeare Tavern,
Jan. 20, 1785.

Every Man His Own Law-Maker;

OR, THE

ENGLISHMAN's COMPLETE GUIDE.

NO one is ignorant, that the great object of a Parliamentary Reform is to bring back ſociety to its original ſtate, and to reſtore mankind at large to the full enjoyment of their natural rights. In conſidering a plan, therefore, for this purpoſe, it is neceſſary to recur to the firſt principles of Liberty. Among theſe, none ſo immediately claims our attention, as that ſelf-evident and univerſally received maxim, "That no man can be "bound by any laws to which he has not given his indi- "vidual conſent, either in his own perſon, or by a "deputy appointed by him for that purpoſe." And from hence a ſecond maxim will inevitably follow: "That as no individual can claim a right to make laws "to bind another againſt his conſent, ſo neither can ſuch "a right exiſt in any number of individuals acting col- "lectively." And from theſe it muſt neceſſarily be inferred, "That as every man has a right to obey ſuch "laws only as he ſhall himſelf conſent to, ſo alſo has he "a right to obey them, ſo long only as he ſhall himſelf "chooſe to continue that conſent."

Theſe maxims muſt be allowed to be incontrovertible: for what right can ſuperiority of ſtrength, rank, property, information, or abilities, give to any man to make laws for another, by nature his equal? Or how can the natural

natural and independent rights of any one perſon be taken away by the joint act of any number of others, born on the ſame footing with himſelf? Or, laſtly, how can a man be ſubject to the operation of any law, after the circumſtances have altered which induced him to agree to it, and he has withdrawn that conſent, which alone rendered it binding upon him? It were therefore much to be wiſhed, as well for promoting the meaſure before us, as for the general peace and good order of ſociety, that ſuch maxims could be univerſally circulated; and with this view, that all Judges and Magiſtrates would diligently inculcate them to the various perſons that come before them; that huſbands would repeat them frequently to their wives; that parents would inſtil them early into the minds of their children; that maſters would teach them to their ſervants and apprentices; officers to their ſoldiers; and jailors to their priſoners.

Every plan which ſhall loſe ſight of theſe ideas, and leave us in the ſervile ſituation of paying obedience to laws ſubverſive of the freedom of our wills, and inconſiſtent with the momentary bent of our inclinations, muſt be rejected as inadequate, and formed rather to quiet our demands than to GIVE US OUR RIGHTS. For this reaſon, I paſs over all propoſitions of adding Knights, and enlarging Boroughs; of taking from one man and giving to another, as miſerable palliatives, by which, after infinite diſquiet, contention, and ill-blood, the ſame deſcription of men, and almoſt the ſame individuals as at preſent, would be returned to Parliament. And I haſten to the conſideration of more extenſive and liberal plans, which may ſtrike at the root of the evil, and not only make an entire change in the body of conſtituents,

ſtituents, but effectually rid us of the preſent ſet of repreſentatives*.

A noble Duke has given it as his opinion, that to allow every man a vote in his particular diſtrict, together with annual elections, would be the moſt effectual and permanent Reform of Parliament.

This plan, however, notwithſtanding its ſeeming liberality, in profeſſing to extend the election franchiſe to every man, yet by confining the exerciſe of it to their own particular diſtricts, at one blow excludes a very numerous as well as reſpectable body of Britiſh ſubjects, known by the denomination of *Vagrants*. This is peculiarly oppreſſive; for if ſuch a privilege is really of any value, ſurely they ſtand moſt in need of it, who, excepting what they occaſionally ſteal, have never any thing of value in their poſſeſſion. For it is judiciouſly obſerved in the Letters of the Conſtitutional Society†, "That they who poſſeſs nothing valuable but the rights "of Engliſhmen, are more intereſted than any other in "their preſervation." Nor can I imagine any apology for this omiſſion, except that the noble Duke foreſaw, that, however debarred by his plan from voting at any, they would in fact vote at as many places, and as often at each place, as upon a due conſideration of the rewards propoſed, they might think eligible.

But this excluſion ſeems to fall with particular ſeverity on that enlightened body of foreign travellers, di-

* May we not here be allowed to expreſs our juſt admiration of that *radical Parliamentary Reform* projected by *Guy Faux?*

† Vide Letters printed by order of the Society for Conſtitutional Information, page 41, l. 8.

ſtinguiſhed by the name of *Gypſies*. It will ſcarcely be believed, that till within theſe two years, there remained on our ſtatute-book, Acts of Parliament particularly affecting this claſs of Citizens (that is, ſubjecting them to be hanged wherever they could be caught) to which they not only had never given their conſent, but there is the greateſt reaſon to believe they would have refuſed it had they been conſulted. And though theſe laws have been of late years repealed, yet ſuch as are ſtill left in force againſt them, under the deſcription of Rogues and Vagabonds, (by which they may be whipped, and committed for hard labour), hitherto remain without this neceſſary ſanction: And therefore till they ſhall have either given their approbation in perſon, or ſent their Gypſy King to Parliament, with inſtructions to aſſent to them on their behalf, it will behove every prudent Magiſtrate to ſuſpend their execution.

But the further we purſue this ſyſtem of Reform, the greater are the defects that we perceive in it. It makes no proviſion to extend to thoſe unfortunate conſtituents who happen, from caſual circumſtances, to be confined in certain ſtrong houſes in the ſeveral Counties of England, the exerciſe of their unalienable birth-right, either by removing the election for a few hours within the *gaol*, or by introducing them in ſome ſafe method upon the huſtings*. How doubly unfortunate and pitiable muſt be the lot of felons and convicts, if they are to be hurried away to the hulk or the gallows, without being

* The laſt election for *Weſtminſter* is the only one that approached at all to the ſpirit of theſe proviſions: On which occaſion we had the ſatisfaction to ſee the *King's-Bench* and the *Fleet* pour forth many hundreds of *Weſtminſter Houſekeepers* to poll for Mr. Fox. *Newgate*, however, was not allowed to ſupply it's ſhare to the ſupport of this great Patriot.

allowed

allowed to take their laſt affectionate leave of this deareſt of all privileges! A privilege ſo particularly valuable to them while ſtanding on the brink of eternity; ſince we are told by the Letters of the Conſtitutional Society, "That not only their temporal proſperity, but the virtues of their mind, and perhaps EVERLASTING FELICITY may be affected by it*."

But it may poſſibly be obſerved, that if they were brought upon the huſtings, they might happen to communicate the itch, louſy diſeaſe, or gaol diſtemper, to numbers of their fellow voters. This is an idle objection, when it is conſidered how eaſily Gentlemen might fortify themſelves againſt ſuch apprehenſions, by merely keeping about them a ſmall bottle of *Thieves' Vinegar*. This excellent preſervative againſt infections, could not be uſed on a more ſuitable occaſion: And if it ſhould be objected, that the receipt is not generally known, I ſhould be very ready to furniſh it; and it might be added as a ſchedule to the Reform Bill, or perhaps with more propriety inſerted as an eſſential clauſe in the ſtatute itſelf.

If however it was thought proper to remove the elections for a given time to the *priſons*, it might be conſidered whether the *hoſpitals* ſhould not be included in the ſame plan; particularly that very celebrated and extenſive ſeminary for moral and political lucubrations, at the bottom of *Moorfields*. For would it not be the higheſt ingratitude, to exclude *thoſe* from the benefit, to whom we are principally indebted for the introduction of this meaſure? Not to mention how much their wiſdom,

* Vide Letters, p. 42, at bottom.

in ſuch an inſtance, ſhould induce us to wiſh for the aſſiſtance of their counſels; and that in the more free and enlightened governments of Turkey, Barbary, Perſia, and the Eaſt-Indies, particular regard is paid to the opinion of *ſages* of this claſs, who by general conſent are reſpected and almoſt worſhipped as ſuperior and inſpired beings.

Thus far we have proceeded with ſpirit and effect to ſupply the omiſſions of preceding Reformers. Yet if we were to ſtop here, we ſhould but have given freedom to one half of the community: The *fairer* and *more amiable* part would ſtill remain in a ſtate of ſlavery. No liberal mind can for a moment endure ſuch a thought. Let us then fly to the aid of thoſe unfortunate *free women*, thoſe oppreſſed *votreſſes*, whoſe native weakneſs and modeſty has ſo long prevented them from aſſerting their rights: Let us liberate them from the unconſtitutional reſtrictions under which they have hitherto laboured; and ſecure to them freedom and independence in the choice of members.

Nor will this meaſure be new or ſingular: If we refer to the happy and incorrupt days of Queen Elizabeth, we ſhall there find it eſtabliſhed in precedent and antient practice. So great was the influence of Ladies at that period, that, not content with the mere franchiſe of voting, they in ſome caſes aſſerted the right of being the only voters; as a proof of which, there is ſtill extant a Return * for a conſiderable town, made in the 14th year of

* This Return is preſerved in the Chapel of the Rolls, and runs as follows:

"To all chriſtian people to whom this preſent writing ſhall come. I, Dame Dorothy Packington, Widow, late Wife of Sir John Packington, Kt. Lord and Owner of the Town of Aylesbury, ſend greeting. Know ye ME, *the ſaid Dame Dorothy Packington, to have choſen, named, and appointed* my truſty and well-beloved

of that Princeſs's reign, in which a lady claims the whole borough as her own perſonal right and property, and takes upon herſelf alone the double office of elector and returning officer: whence it is manifeſt, that the admiſſion of the fair-ſex to the franchiſe of election, is not only a reſtoration of their natural rights, but a renovation of the old Britiſh conſtitution.

But I cannot avoid dwelling with particular emphaſis (though it is what will naturally have occurred to the judicious Reformer) on the ſuperior claims of *pregnant women*, who, in juſtice to the embryo voter in their womb, ſhould certainly be allowed a double franchiſe; for neither does the tender age of an unborn infant allow him to venture abroad for this purpoſe, nor can we preſume to propoſe the ſame remedy in this caſe as in that of priſons, where the election was to be moved to the place of confinement.

A learned and accurate Judge informs us, that an infant in his mother's womb is ſuppoſed in law to be born for many purpoſes, and thoſe by no means unimportant *. And we learn from the hiſtorians of the latter Roman empire, that when the crown of Perſia deſcended to a perſon

beloved Thomas Litchfield, and George Burden, Eſquires, *to be my Burgeſſes of my ſaid Town of Ayleſbury*. And whatſoever the ſaid Thomas, and George, Burgeſſes, ſhall do in the ſervice of the Queen's Highneſs, in that preſent Parliament to be holden at Weſtminſter the eighth day of May next enſuing the date hereof, I the ſame Dorothy Packington do ratify and approve to be my own act, as fully and wholly as if I were or might be preſent there. In witneſs whereof, to theſe preſents I have ſet my ſeal this fourth day of May, in the 14th year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Elizabeth, by the Grace of God, of England, France, and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith, &c."

* Vide Judge Blackſtone's chapter upon the abſolute rights of perſons; in which he tells us, that "an infant *in ventre ſa mere*, or in the mother's womb, "is ſuppoſed in law to be born for many purpoſes. It is capable of having a "legacy,

perſon in this predicament, it was thought no reaſon for delaying the ceremony of his coronation †. Add to this, that it was with the approbation of the grave and venerable Doctors of the Univerſity of Paris, that infants in the ſame ſituation were admitted to the privileges of baptiſm ‡. And with theſe authorities in favour of their political and religious rights, it can no longer ſeem conſiſtent with a free conſtitution to withhold from them, or their mothers in truſt for them, the moſt eſſential of all rights, that of election. Such a privilege might, like the "jus trium liberorum" among the Romans, tend very greatly to the encouragement of population, at a time that the country has been much exhauſted by a

"legacy, or a ſurrender of a copyhold eſtate made to it. It may have a "guardian aſſigned to it, and it is enabled to have an eſtate limited to its uſe, "and to take afterwards by ſuch limitation, as if it were then actually born." —Why therefore ſhould it not alſo be ſuppoſed in law to be born for that moſt neceſſary of all purpoſes, giving its vote at elections?

† Lord Bolingbroke quotes this inſtance in his Patriot King, as follows: "I "have read in one of the hiſtorians of the latter Roman empire, that SAPORES "the famous king of *Perſia*, againſt whom JULIAN made the expedition wherein "he loſt his life, was crowned in his mother's womb. His father left her with "child, the magi declared that the child would be a male; whereupon the royal "enſigns were brought forth, they were placed on her Majeſty's belly, and the "princes, and the ſatrapes proſtrate recognized the embryo-monarch."

‡ Formerly, by the Romiſh Rituals, a child in its mother's womb could only be baptized when on the point of birth, and upon the proviſo that ſome part or other of the child's body be ſeen by the baptizer: But the Doctors of the Sorbonne, by a deliberation held amongſt them April 10, 1733, enlarged the powers of the midwives, by determining, that though no part of the child's body ſhall appear, baptiſm ſhall nevertheleſs be adminiſtered to it by injection, *par le moyen d'une petite canulle*. The reaſon aſſigned for this determination is equally convincing, and applicable to the preſent queſtion: "Le Conſeil eſtime que l'on "pourroit ſe ſervir du moyen propoſé, dans la confiance, qu'il a, *que Dieu n'a "point laiſſé ces ſortes d'enfans ſans aucuns ſecours.*" The whole of theſe proceedings are detailed at length in Triſtram Shandy, vol. I. p. 121. And to that philoſophical performance we will refer ſuch of our readers as wiſh to know more of this ingenious reform in baptiſm, to which millions yet unborn are ſo largely indebted.

ruinous

ruinous war, and continual emigrations. Twenty-four hours on the eve of a general election, might alone repair all the havock which we have ſuſtained in America. There would then be no occaſion (particularly to Gentlemen of a hale and ſound conſtitution) to reſort to thoſe troubleſome methods of keeping up their election intereſt by grants of annuities, or conveyance of burgage tenures. And as for thoſe ladies who might give a falſe account of this qualification, it would be eaſy to ſtrike off their ſecond vote upon a ſcrutiny.

But as nothing can take place ſo long as the franchiſes of boroughs continue to be tolerated, let us haſten to remove theſe obſtructions. And here if any one ſhould feel any ſentiments of remorſe or pity for their fate, or ſhould queſtion their evil effects, let me only remind them, how often they fall into the hands of men, who having monopolized immenſe tracts of land, and vaſt ſums of money, ought not in conſcience to pretend to any other advantages; and who are already ſo much intereſted in the proſperity of the ſtate, that it cannot be neceſſary to connect them with it by any ſhare in its legiſlation. Some of theſe places they are apt to repreſent themſelves, or to conſign to their neareſt relations and friends; while others, perhaps, are handed over to ſuch perſons as, being poſſeſſed of great wealth, but no borough intereſt, are ready to pay a valuable conſideration for the advantage of gaining a ſhare in the legiſlature; and this upon the ſame mercenary views that merchants take out inſurances upon their goods and houſes. It muſt therefore be our endeavour to prevent thoſe perſons who have fortunes, interfering with the peculiar province of thoſe who have none, to elect members to repreſent the kingdom in Parliament.

Such

Such being the evil of boroughs, it may well be aſked, whence ſuch nuiſances derive their being? or, in other words, what is a borough? *A parchment with a lump of wax dangling to it*, conſtitutes its whole ſoul and exiſtence! May we not therefore exclaim with that celebrated Reformer, *Jack Cade*, or with any other *Jack*, "Is not this a "lamentable thing, that of the ſkin of an innocent lamb "ſhould be made *parchment?* That *parchment* being ſcrib-"bled over ſhould undo a man? Some ſay the *bee* ſtings; "but I ſay, 'tis the *bee's wax*; for I did but ſeal once to a "thing, and I was never my own man ſince *." In the ſame manner, from the ſcribbling upon parchment and the ſealing with bee's wax, we may date the origin of borough repreſentation, and all our ſubſequent misfortunes! We never have been ourſelves from that period!

Let us away then with theſe parchments without delay or heſitation!—*No half-meaſures—No palliatives—Give us a ſyſtem!* The juſt indignation of ſome Reformers would inſtantly commit them to the flames; but others, who on cooler reflection would not neglect ſuch an opportunity of uniting œconomy with reform, adviſe rather to ſell the ſkins to taylors, to be cut up into meaſures; and the ſeals to the chandlers, to be melted into wax-lights: While others, more compaſſionate, are content with propoſing that they ſhould be delivered up, with *all their lands, tenements, houſes, warehouſes, buildings, books, records, documents, acts, inſtruments, letters, papers, ſhips, veſſels, goods, wares, merchandizes, money, ſecurities for money, and all other effects whatſoever*, to the ſpecial care and diſpoſal of ſeven Commiſſioners, for the benefit of the Corporations and the Public. I do not profeſs to be inſenſible to the merit of theſe ſeveral propoſals; particularly the laſt, which

* Henry VI. Second Part.

muſt

muſt be allowed to be happily contrived for the extirpation of all abuſes. Nor ſhould I heſitate to conſent to it, had I not ſome favourite expedients of my own in view; for every perſon muſt be excuſed for being partial to his own productions. And when it ſhall be conſidered, that my Plans have the ſuperior merit of ſtriking equally at *Borough Elections*, and at *Bribery* (the conſtant attendant of every kind of election) I ſhall be allowed to have good reaſon for my partiality.

The ſource of bribery has, in my apprehenſion, been this:—That a ſeat in the Houſe of Commons has in latter times been attended with ſo much honour and advantage, as to become the ambition of almoſt every man of fortune; while the Electors of England have become ſo ſenſible of its value, that they have been determined not to beſtow ſuch a favour, without receiving ſome mark of acknowledgment and gratitude.

For if we look into Hiſtory, every page of it will ſhew us how pure and exemplary thoſe times were, when the Parliament were of ſcarce any conſequence. * No con-

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* The time when the evils of Boroughs and Bribery were leaſt felt, was previous to the reign of Henry III., when there was no Houſe of Commons at all, but the ſummons to Parliament was directed only, *Epiſcopis, Abbatibus, cunctiſq; Regni Baronibus.* That Prince, *by the advice of the Biſhops*, in order to break the power of the Barons, was the firſt who ſummoned Knights to Parliament: But as they were not called *ad conſulendum*, but merely *ad conſentiendum*, no dignity or advantage was annexed to their ſituation. Under ſuch a Conſtitution, Bribery could not thrive; for a ſeat in the Houſe of Commons was rather a burthen than an object of ambition. Accordingly, there is no inſtance of any election-job till the reign of Queen *Elizabeth*; when the Borough of Weſtbury was knocked down to Thomas Long, Gentleman, for the ſum of four pounds lawful money of Great Britain. But under the reigns of the *Stuarts* we hear little more of enormities of this nature;

teſted elections; no double returns; no marketing of Boroughs; no bribery. The contention, if any, was to avoid being returned; and the money, when any was ſpent, came out of the pockets of the Electors, to pay the expences of the elected. In order, therefore, to renovate the ſpirit of thoſe happy days, nothing can be required but to reſtore the Houſe of Commons to its primitive ſtate of ſubordination and inſignificance.

To effect this purpoſe, the moſt obvious method would be, to render back to the Crown the Prerogatives of which it was abridged by the Revolution, which could not fail to renew every ſymptom of purity previous to that event. But there unhappily exiſts in mo-

nature; a circumſtance to be attributed to the conſtitutional exertions of thoſe Princes, in the depreſſion of their faithful Commons.

It grieves me to name the period when the monſter *Corruption* firſt began to rear its head: The period was that of the great *Revolution*. King *William*, of glorious and immortal memory, may be conſidered as the father of *Bribery*. To him it was owing that the Houſe of Commons attained that degree of dignity and eſtimation, which has ſince given riſe to perpetual contentions for ſeats, and all their concomitant evils. In vain did he attempt, in the eighth year of his reign, to cruſh by ſtatute the neceſſary effect of his own proceedings. Neither he, nor ſubſequent Princes, have ſucceeded in their endeavours for this purpoſe; for prohibitions are uſeleſs, while they leave the cauſe ſtill to operate, and forbear to ſtrike at the root of the evil.

In the Roman Commonwealth the ſame grievance aroſe out of the ſame cauſes: But that nation was more fortunate in their remedy. The entire ſubjection of the known world to the Roman government, had rendered a ſeat in its councils the higheſt aim of human ambition. Hence the predominance of that bribery, which *Cicero* lamented it was not in the power of laws to cure. "It is not (ſays he, in the 2d book of his Offices) above 120 years "ago, that there were no laws againſt bribery; yet how many have been "paſſed ſince that time, each more ſevere than thoſe which preceded it! How "many have been found guilty! How many condemned!" Had Cicero ſurvived a few years longer, he would have ſeen the extinction of this evil, by the riſe of the imperial power, and conſequent degradation of the conſular dignity.

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dern times, ſuch a jealouſy of *regal* power (certainly not founded in the abuſe of that power, during the ten years of any former Adminiſtration) that it is not ſafe to make ſuch a ſpecific propoſal. And perhaps there might be an objection to ſuch a ſtep on the part of his Majeſty, who has manifeſted an uniform attachment to the eſtabliſhed frame of our Conſtitution, and whoſe preſent ſituation can hardly tempt him to engage in ſuch experiments. But though his Majeſty might wiſh to be excuſed, and the conduct of his preſent ſervants will not ſuffer us to look to them; yet, upon diligent enquiry, there might be found among the Champions of the People, ſome Ex-miniſter, who, upon the proſpect of ſuch a benefit to the public, might be willing to offer his ſervices.

This, therefore, is the ground-work of my Plan: To make a perſon of this deſcription Miniſter, with ſupreme power over the three preſent branches of the Legiſlature: A meaſure which might be accompliſhed either by a regular Act, openly creating him Protector, or Dictator; or more quietly, but with equal effect, by transferring to him, or to Seven Truſtees for him, the whole property, ſtock, and influence of the Eaſt India Company*. To ſuch a ſtep there could be no objection, as this property lies entirely uſeleſs in the hands of its

* If any perſon ſhould doubt the ſufficiency of this influence for the purpoſes intended, let him contemplate the following heads (ſtated in Mr. Pulteney's Pamphlet), of which that influence conſiſts, viz. offices to the value of two millions annually, trade, purchaſe of goods, ſhipping, ſtores, recruits, ſales, mode and time of payments, debts in India, bringing home and recovering fortunes, promotions, contracts, inland trade, intimidation with regard to acquiſitions, and inquiries into conduct; foreign Companies, foreign States, and Indian Princes, who have an influence in this country; and other ſources of influence innumerable.

preſent poſſeſſors; and by this means it might be turned to a national ſervice. The preſent mercenary Houſe of Commons would be inſtantly thrown at his feet; and he might then ſay, with his grand Prototype in Shakeſpeare, "Away, away, burn all the records of the "realm! My mouth ſhall be the Parliament of Eng-"land*!" The effect would inſtantly follow, that gentlemen of property, ſenſible of no uſe, and ſeeing much diſgrace from ſitting in ſuch an aſſembly, would leave the elections every where undiſputed, to this Miniſter and his Creatures.

But in caſe ſuch a plan ſhould meet with any unforeſeen difficulties, a ſecond ſtill remains; but of a nature very oppoſite, and perhaps leſs open to cavil. Inſtead of making the Miniſter ſupreme, it is to enable him to carry on the Government, by diveſting him of all power and influence whatſoever. With this view, I ſhould propoſe to aboliſh all places and penſions; to make it flat burglary to take ſalaries; and grand larceny to accept of peerages: And laſtly, to inſtitute a Commiſſion, to inſpect and controul the accounts of his Majeſty's houſekeepers, purveyors, and neceſſary-women. Surely in theſe ſpirited times, there cannot be wanting footboys and cook maids, who will ſerve the Crown for nothing. Theſe ſeveral Regulations would effectually damp the preſent rage for ſeats in the Houſe of Commons.

Though this laſt expedient has not the advantage of *experience* in its favour (no government ſince the creation having ever been attempted on ſuch a plan), yet we muſt conſider that this deficiency would be amply compenſated by the merit of *originality*. And we ſhould conſider it as

* Henry VI. Part II. Act 4.

its

its beſt recommendation, if it proved the means of bringing back the community to that point of equality, from which it originally proceeded.

It is needleſs to enlarge upon the effects which would immediately follow the adoption of ſuch a propoſition. In the ſcarcity of fit and able candidates, the electors might be put to the pleaſing neceſſity of *hiring* perſons to undertake their ſervice; ſo that Mr. *Martin* would at length ſee the return of thoſe pure and conſtitutional times, for which he ſo ardently pants *, *when the conſtituents would pay their repreſentatives* †.

But its moſt excellent effect would be, the certain and immediate deſtruction of *Boroughs*. For, when thoſe intereſted bodies of men began to feel the trouble and expence to which they would be put by the poſſeſſion of their charters, they would not only ſurrender them without ſtruggle or reſiſtance, but would petition, as the wiſe Borough of *Doncaſter* is ſaid to have done formerly, to be relieved from the intolerable grievance of repreſentation.

The rotten boroughs being thus annihilated, and their charters in the poſſeſſion of the people, it will be aſked, in what manner they ſhould be diſtributed? The great cities and towns of the North may perhaps put in their claim for ſome: But I ſhould propoſe, as a proper puniſhment for their provoking indifference on this queſtion, and for their backwardneſs in ſending up petitions and remonſtrances to Parliament, when moſt called for, that they ſhould forfeit their ſhare; which would afford us a fund for rewarding the deſerving and meritorious.

* Vide his Speech, June 1784.

† This would no doubt be highly popular, and in the preſent ſtate of the *Faro Bank*, peculiarly acceptable at *Brooks's*.

That

That portion, therefore, which might have been given to *Leeds*, *Birmingham*, *Sheffield*, *Halifax*, *Manchester*, and other culprit towns, might be disposed of in gratuities either to the *Chapter of St. Asaph* for the exertions of its virtuous *Dean*, to the *Nottingham Militia* for the use of its Major, or to the *Licentiates in Physic*, as a proper fee for the disinterested attention which some of them have shewn to the very crazy and consumptive constitution of this kingdom. I should also submit for consideration, whether the Constitutional Society, the Whig Club, the Westminster Association, the Dublin Congress, the Aberdeen Committee, and other Patriotic Meetings, should not each be complimented with a charter or two—in return for their unwearied endeavours to rescue mankind from the encroachments of civil society, and restore them to that free and independent state in which Nature originally placed them.

But before this fund should be exhausted, though I might wave my own personal claims for having written this Treatise, yet I should beg leave to put in a word for an antient and loyal town, whose superior pretensions have been too long overlooked—I mean the extensive and populous town of *Wapping*, whose fate must seem particularly hard, when compared with its natural ally, the ward of *Billingsgate*, which is represented not only in Parliament, but also in the Court of Aldermen; and has even the advantage of sending Mr. *Josiah Dornford* to the venerable Assembly of Common-Council. With what pleasure should we behold a body of men, who have hitherto dragged out a miserable existence without ever tasting the refined and exalted gratification of choosing representatives, revelling in the delights of their new acquisition!

The

The rights of repreſentation being adjuſted, let us figure to ourſelves what a glorious ſcene would every-where preſent itſelf on the great, the important day of election! How flattering to the pride, the conſequence, the dignity of Engliſhmen! to behold upon one ſpot an innumerable body of day-labourers, journeymen, apprentices, weavers, miners, ſoldiers, ſailors, welch-deans, vagrants, poachers, paupers, militia-majors, ſmugglers, ſwindlers, pimps, rogues, gypſies, proteſtant-aſſociators, thieves, houſebreakers, murderers and lunatics, interſperſed with an equal number of females of correſpondent denominations, bawds, harlots, ducheſſes, ballad-ſingers, fortune-tellers, ſailors' doxies, fiſh-women, and women of the people, all met together to exerciſe the higheſt faculties of which human nature is capable, thoſe of delegating the precious truſt of their birth-right to ſome favoured citizen, and inſtructing him what laws to make, what taxes to impoſe, and what miniſters to ſupport! No court favourite, no ſordid monopolizer of land and money would dare to face ſuch an aſſembly. The friends of the people would every-where have the field to themſelves, and would alone be ſucceſsful and triumphant; ſo that a deciſive blow would be ſtruck to the predominance of a hateful ariſtocracy†.

† Perhaps this would more than renovate the ſpirit of the elections in antient times, which are thus deſcribed in the Act of Henry VI. for confining the right of voting to 40s. freeholders: "Whereas elections of knights have "been made with *great outrages*, and *exceſſive number of people*, of which moſt "part was *people of no value*, yet pretend *a voice equivalent to worthy knights* "*and eſquires*, whereby many *riots*, *manſlaughters*, and *diviſion* among gentle-"men ſhall likely be, Our Lord the King hath ordained, that knights be choſen "by people dwelling in the counties, every one of them having lands or tene-"ments to the value of 40s. per annum."

The

The Repreſentatives being returned, there may ſeem to be a difficulty, how the Electors are to give them thoſe occaſional inſtructions that muſt be neceſſary, upon the various public queſtions likely to ariſe after they are ſeated in Parliament. For before that time a conſiderable part of the conſtituent body may be hanged; another part may be gone on their travels to America; and a third fled from the hue and cry of thief-takers; ſome may be carried on board a tender, to ſerve his Majeſty; and others may be gone volunteers to Senegambia: So that upon ſummoning another meeting, an entirely freſh ſucceſſion of men would appear, conſiſting of thoſe juſt returned from tranſportation, deſerters from the army and navy, out-laws from foreign countries, or refugees from priſons; who would not be competent to decide, in the room of their abſent friends: And out of all the original Electors, we ſhould only be able to learn the opinions of thoſe for whom the Ordinary of Newgate might vouch, as having died in, or renounced the Coalition Faith; or who might be found, from a reference to their pedigrees, to have an hereditary right to Whig principles To all this the ſolution is eaſy; that the Elections being annual, one would not be finiſhed before the other began; ſo that there would be a conſtant Court of Conſtituents, if I may ſo ſay, ready ſitting, to determine all appeals upon conſtitutional queſtions at the ſhorteſt warning. To this we may add another advantage, that there would be no interval for a *ſcrutiny*; ſo that the Champions of the People might be ſecure from this mode of Miniſterial Perſecution; and the chaſte *Penelope* of the day might weave her web of *canvaſs* in Covent Garden, without any danger of ſeeing it unwoven in the pariſh veſtry-rooms.

Let

Let us here pauſe, and reflect for a moment on the happy conſequences of ſuch a ſyſtem! What might not be done with ſuch a Parliament thus inſtructed! Then they would at laſt turn their thoughts to objects worthy conſideration! Then nothing would be going forward day after day, but impeaching Miniſters and repealing Taxes! The Receipt Tax would be repealed! The Gin Tax would be repealed! The Window Tax would be repealed! A mercenary ſtanding army would be diſbanded! And a griping ſet of exciſemen and collectors aboliſhed! Thoſe who talked of laws and levies, ſhould be rewarded with halters and axes! And Temple Bar ſhould be crouded with the heads of Lords of the Realm and Privy Counſellors! Or, to ſum up all in the emphatical words of *Dick the Butcher*, and his friend *Jack Cade*, "Sin would be ſtruck down like an ox, and ini-"quity's throat cut like a calf. All the realm ſhould "be in common, and in Cheapſide ſhould our palfries go "to graſs; there ſhould be no occaſion for money; all "ſhould eat and drink on the public ſcore." We ſhould then at laſt behold the extinction of tyranny, corruption, and law; and hail the golden reign of The MAN and MAJESTY of the PEOPLE.

FINIS.

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But the inſtruction that may be drawn from SHAKSPEARE is equal to the entertainment which his writings afford. He is the greateſt maſter of human nature, and of human life, that, perhaps, ever exiſted; ſo that we cannot peruſe his works without having our underſtandings conſiderably enlarged. Beſides this, he abounds in occaſional maxims and reflections, which are calculated to make a deep impreſſion upon the mind. There is ſcarcely any circumſtance in the common occurrences of the world, on which ſomething may not be found peculiarly applicable in SHAKSPEARE; and at the ſame time, better expreſſed than in any other author. To promote, therefore, knowledge of him, is to contribute to the general improvement.

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